

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0105
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE
USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 06954

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, UR, ET, SO
SUBJECT: U.S. DEMARCHE TO SOVIETS ON POSSIBLE SOMALI-
ETHIOPIAN BORDER CLASHES

REFS: (A) STATE 88087, (B) STATE 81714

SUMMARY: EMBASSY DEMARCHE TO SOVIETS ON DANGER OF
RENEWED LOCAL CONFLICT BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA
DRAWS ONLY GENERAL RESPONSE FROM SOVIET SIDE.
SOVIETS EVADE DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC SITUATION AND
ATTEMPTS TO PUT GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY SQUARELY
ON SOMALIS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON APRIL 6 DCM CALLED ON MFA THIRD AFRICAN
DEPT. CHIEF, V. A. USTINOV, TO PRESENT TALKING POINTS
FROM REF A, PARAS 3, 4, AND 5 CONCERNING POSSIBLE
ETHIOPIAN ATTACKS ON BORDER VILLAGES. AFTER
VERBAL PRESENTATION, DCM HANDED OVER NON-PAPER FOR
CLARITY AND REEMPHASIZED HOPE THAT SOVIET GOVERNMENT
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WOULD COUNSEL THE ETHIOPIANS TO SHOW RESTRAINT IN
PRESENT SITUATION.

2. USTINOV THANKED DCM FOR INFORMATION, REFERRED
TO LATE MARCH EXCHANGE BETWEEN SECRETARY AND
DOBRYNIN ON SUBJECT OF HORN AND SAID HE WOULD NOT
REPEAT THESE DETAILS. HE THEN EMBARKED ON

LENGTHY, REPETITIVE, GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE "PRINCIPLED AND CONSISTENT" SOVIET POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALI PROBLEMS. "WE ARE FOR PEACE," HE SAID, "AND THROUGH OUR CONTACTS (I.E., WITH ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA), WE ALWAYS REITERATE THIS. WE SUPPORT THE OAU APRIL 10 MEETING AND IF POSITIVE RESULTS COME FROM THIS MEETING, WE WILL SUPPORT THEM FULLY," HE ADDED.

3. ROOT OF PROBLEM, SAID USTINOV, IS THAT SOMALIS HAVE NEVER RENOUNCED THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO PORTIONS OF TERRITORY OF ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND TO DJIBOUTI. THE USE OF FORCE TO SETTLE BORDER DISPUTES OR ETHNIC PROBLEMS IN AFRICA IS IMPOSSIBLE. ETHIOPIA, THE VICTIM OF AGGRESSION, HAS DECLARED THAT IT HAS NO CLAIM ON SOMALI TERRITORY AND THAT ITS FORCES WILL NOT CROSS THE SOMALI BORDER. THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY HAS STOPPED NOT ON THE BORDER ITSELF, BUT BACK FROM THE BORDER. YET, HE WENT ON, THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS SAID THAT IT CANNOT REFUSE TO HELP THE WESTERN SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT, AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT ITSELF. THE PROBLEM IS NOT ONE FOR ETHIOPIA, BUT ONE FOR SOMALIA. THE SOMALIS ARE THE ONES SENDING ARMS AND PEOPLE INTO ETHIOPIA WHERE MILITARY ACTION IS
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TAKING PLACE. THE MAIN TASK, HE CONCLUDED, IS TO CONVINCE THE SOMALIS TO RENOUNCE THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AND TO AVOID THE USE OF FORCE AND YOU (THE U.S.) CAN SPEAK TO THEM AS WE CANNOT. NOR SHOULD THE SOMALIS BE ARMED, HE CONCLUDED.

4. DCM REPLIED THAT NO PURPOSE WOULD BE SERVED BY RENEWING A DISCUSSION OF THE BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, BUT STRESSED THE DANGER WE SEE IN CURRENT SITUATION OF ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER UTILIZING A PRETEXT TO RENEW MILITARY ACTIVITY. IT WOULD BE IN BOTH OUR INTERESTS, HE ADDED, TO COUNSEL RESTRAINT AND AVOIDANCE OF FURTHER MILITARY ACTION. WE, ON OUR PART, ARE GIVING SUCH COUNSEL TO ALL PARTIES AND WE HOPE THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT WILL DO THE SAME, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE ETHIOPIANS.

5. USTINOV, IN TURN, SAID ETHIOPIANS HAD DECLARED THEIR READINESS TO CONDUCT BORDER DEMARCATION TALKS, AND HE AGAIN REPEATED THAT THIS WAS NOT A PROBLEM FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ETHIOPIA SINCE THAT COUNTRY HAD NO CLAIMS AGAINST SOMALIA. HE CONCLUDED BY

REFERRING TO "OFFICIAL" SOMALI CLAIMS ON DJIBOUTI,
AND TO SOVIET SUPPORT FOR DJIBOUTI TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE AS
EXAMPLIFIED BY RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET-

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EXDIS

DJIBOUTI DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

6. DCM STATED U.S. POSITION OF SIMILAR SUPPORT
FOR DJIBOUTI AND REEMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING
MILITARY ACTION IN SPECIFIC, CURRENT SITUATION.
USTINOV SAID HE AGREED AND THAT, BASED ON HIS
TALKS WITH THE ETHIOPIANS, HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT
ETHIOPIAN INTENTIONS WERE TO AVOID MILITARY ACTIVITY
PROVIDED THAT THERE ARE NO FURTHER PROVOCATIONS
FROM THE SOMALIS.

7. COMMENT: USTINOV CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANY ASSURANCE
THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD USE THEIR INFLUENCE ON THIS
MATTER, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STRIVING TO LEAVE
THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS FORESEE NO FURTHER
MILITARY ACTIONS BY ETHIOPIA AGAINST SOMALI SO LONG
AS THE LATTER DO NOT RENEW THEIR ATTACK. HIS
HARSH WORDS ABOUT SOMALI SUPPORT FOR THE WSLF,
HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE INCLINED
TO EXCUSE (AT LEAST IN PUBLIC) FURTHER ETHIOPIAN
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MILITARY ACTION ON GROUNDS THAT SOMALIA CONTINUES
TO ACT IN A PROVOCATIVE MANNER. IT IS CONCEIVABLE
HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIETS WILL PRIVATELY COUNSEL
RESTRAINT IF THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT FURTHER
ETHIOPIAN ATTACKS WOULD UNDERMINE AFRICAN SUPPORT.
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